Developments

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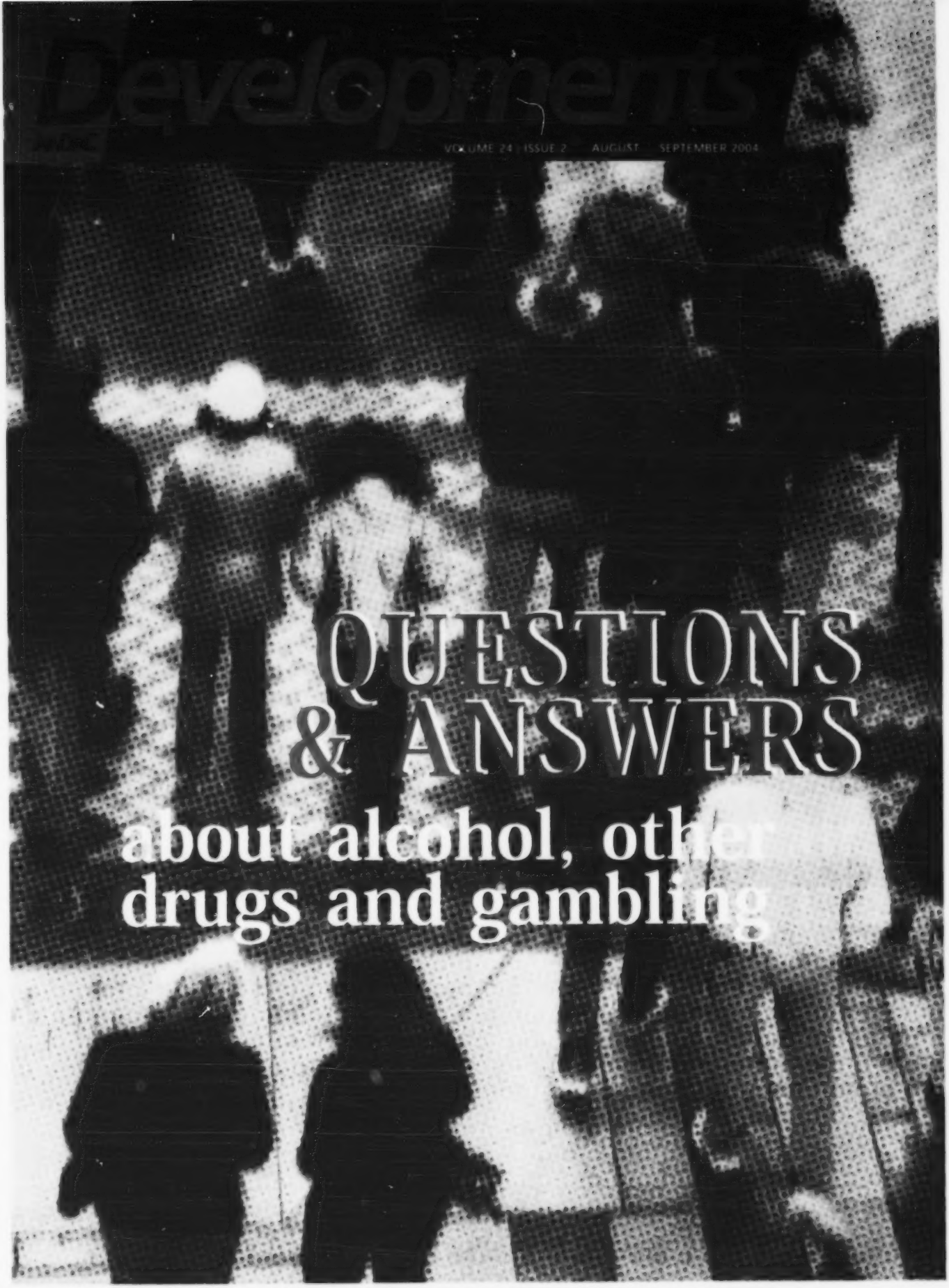


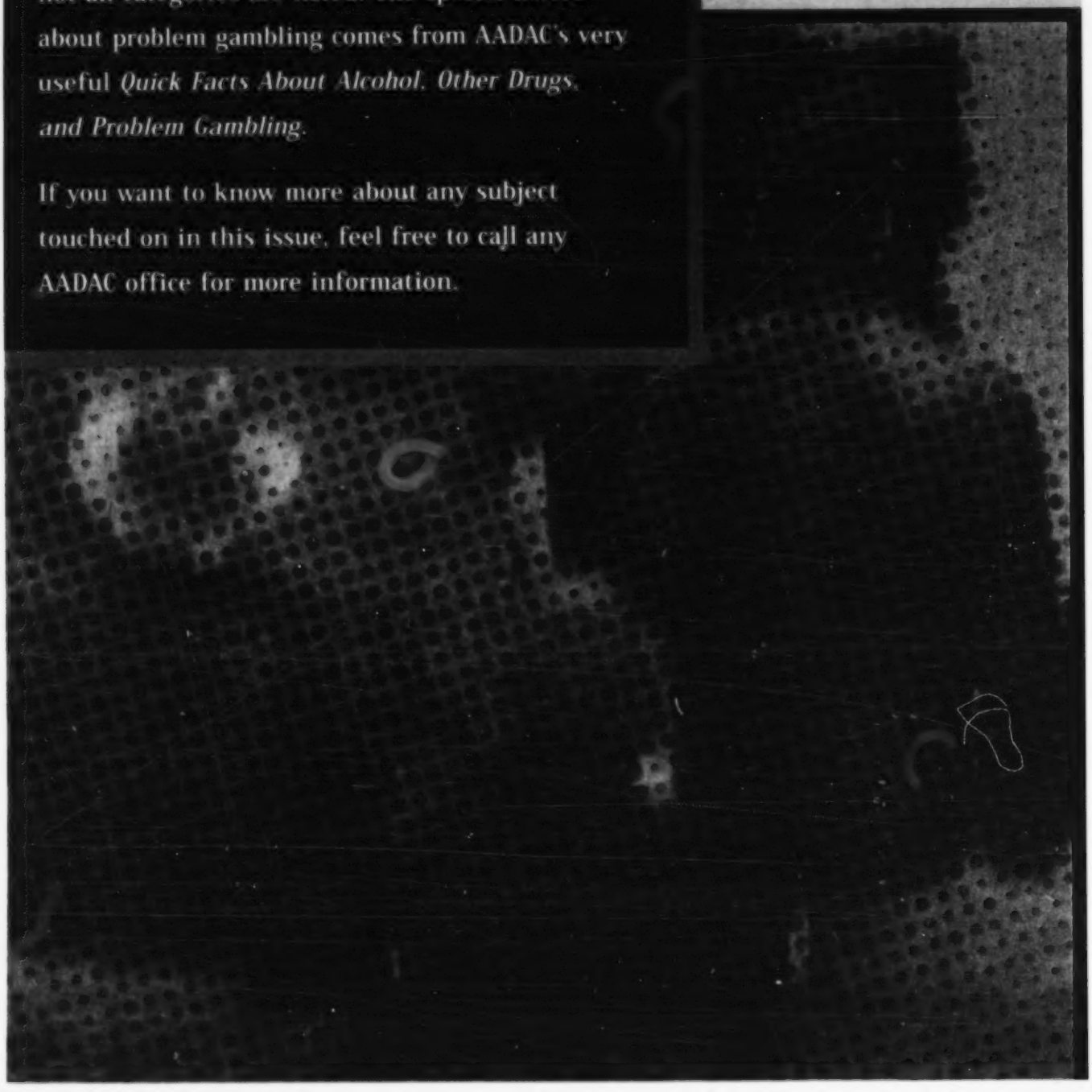
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

about alcohol, other drugs and gambling

Questions and answers about AADAC clients

This issue of *Developments* is dedicated to answering some of the questions people ask us most often. The client statistics we give here have been taken from the 2003–2004 results of the AADAC System for Information and Service Tracking. Please note that figures often do not add up to 100% because of rounding, or because not all categories are listed. The special insert about problem gambling comes from AADAC's very useful *Quick Facts About Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Problem Gambling*.

If you want to know more about any subject touched on in this issue, feel free to call any AADAC office for more information.



Describe the "average" AADAC client

In 2003–2004, AADAC (not including its Funded Agencies) provided treatment to 29,847 people. Most of those clients were people who were concerned about their own use of alcohol, other drugs or gambling, but over 4,800 were clients troubled by someone else's gambling or use of substances. These clients are termed "collateral" clients.

Of the people who came to AADAC for treatment because of their own use in 2003–2004, 18% were under the age of 18. Of collateral clients, 8% were under 18.

Sixty-nine per cent of 2003–2004 clients were male; 31% were female. Of collateral clients, 71% were female and 29% male.

About one-quarter (23%) of AADAC's clients concerned about their own use had a Grade 9 or less education; 31% had completed some high school. Fifty-five per cent of adult clients had completed at least Grade 12 (or Grade 13 where applicable). About 18% had post-secondary education.

Most clients (53%) were single when they entered treatment at AADAC; 28% were married, were living common-law, or were with a partner. Nine per cent of clients were divorced, approximately 9% were separated, and 1% was widowed.

Over half (54%) of all clients were unemployed but only 25% were seeking employment. Thirty-two per cent of clients were employed full-time, 10% were employed part-time, and 5% were self-employed. The most common occupations were construction (21%) and service and sales (20%).

About 84% of clients came to AADAC for alcohol or other drug issues: 30% for alcohol only, 34% for other drugs only, and 20% for both alcohol and other drugs. A total of 24% came for concerns about their use of other drugs in combination with alcohol or gambling or both.[1]

Questions and answers about Albertans and alcohol, other drugs and gambling

How many Albertans gamble?

In 2001, 82% of Albertans had gambled in the previous year. Men and women are equally likely to gamble and gambling is popular among all age groups. Compared to previous gambling studies conducted in the province, gambling prevalence has declined since 1994 (90%). The prevalence of gambling in Alberta is lower than in Saskatchewan (87%), British Columbia and Manitoba (85%), and Ontario (83%), but higher than in New Brunswick (80%).[1]

What is the most frequent type of gambling among Albertans?

The most frequently cited gambling activities among Albertans in 2001 were the purchase of lottery tickets (61.8%), raffle or fund-raising tickets (49.5%), and instant-win or scratch tickets (29.2%). While the proportion of Albertans engaging in these activities decreased since 1998, slot machine gambling increased (15.9%). Most common reasons given for gambling are to win money, for fun and entertainment, and to support worthy causes.

How many Albertans have gambling problems?

It is estimated that 5% of the adult population have a gambling problem; this group is responsible for 17% of the total amount Albertans spend on gambling.[2]

How many Albertans drink alcohol?

In 2000–2001, 77% of Albertans aged 12 and over were current drinkers (had consumed at least one drink in the previous year). This rate is similar to the national rate. The proportion of heavy drinkers in Alberta is higher than in the rest of Canada (23% vs. 20%). Heavy drinkers are those consuming five or more drinks on one occasion, 12 or more times in the previous year.[3]

Among students in grades 7 to 12 surveyed in 2002, 56.3% reported alcohol use in the previous 12 months.[3]

Alberta males are more likely to drink than Alberta females (81.6% versus 71.6%) and they are much more likely to be heavy drinkers (30.9% versus 12.8%).[3]

From 1997–1998 to 2001–2002, per capita consumption of absolute (pure) alcohol by Albertans (aged 15 and over) increased from 8.5 litres to 8.7 litres. Per capita consumption in 2001–2002 was equivalent to approximately 500 standard drinks per person, per year.[4]

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What is the most frequent type of gambling among clients?

According to 2003–2004 AADAC client statistics, buying lottery tickets was the most frequent type of gambling (32%), followed by instant win tickets (29%) and video lottery terminals (VLTs, at 26%).

What is the most commonly used drug among clients?

The most commonly used substances by adult clients were alcohol (86%), tobacco (73%), marijuana (47%) cocaine (38%) and opiates (25%). For adult clients, alcohol was the substance most frequently reported as a concern (52% of clients), followed by tobacco (34%) and cocaine.[2]

How many clients are injection drug users?

Seventeen per cent of clients had injected drugs at some point in their lives; 7% had injected in the 12 months prior to treatment.

[1] Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2003). Statistics Report, 2002-04-01 to 2003-03-31. Edmonton: Author. As cited in Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2003). *Alberta Profile: Social and Health Indicators of Addiction* (5th ed., p.33). Edmonton, AB: Author.

[2] Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. *AADAC Profile: AADAC's Adult Clients, April 2003 to March 2004*. Edmonton, AB: Author.

How many Albertans use tobacco?

In 2003, 20% of Albertans (aged 15 and over) were current smokers. Prevalence was highest among young adults aged 20 to 24 years (31%).[3]

In 2002, 16% of students in grades 7 to 12 were cigarette smokers (had smoked cigarettes in the previous 12 months) and 8% used chewing tobacco or snuff.[4]

Smoking rates increase with age: the rate among youth aged 15 to 17 was 25% while among 12- to 14-year-olds it was 7%. Aboriginal youth had more than double the number of smokers (37%) than non-Aboriginal youth (16%) and more Aboriginal youth (32%) used chewing tobacco than non-Aboriginal youth (7%).[5]

AADAC. AADAC Profile: Adult Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta. (2003). Author.

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The Canadian Guidelines on Low-Risk Drinking define a standard drink as

one 341-ml (12-oz.) "regular" strength bottle of beer (5% alcohol),

one 142-ml (5-oz.) glass of table wine (12% alcohol),

one 43-ml (1.5-oz.) serving of spirits (40% alcohol), or

one 85-ml (3-oz.) serving of fortified wine such as sherry or port (18% alcohol).[10]

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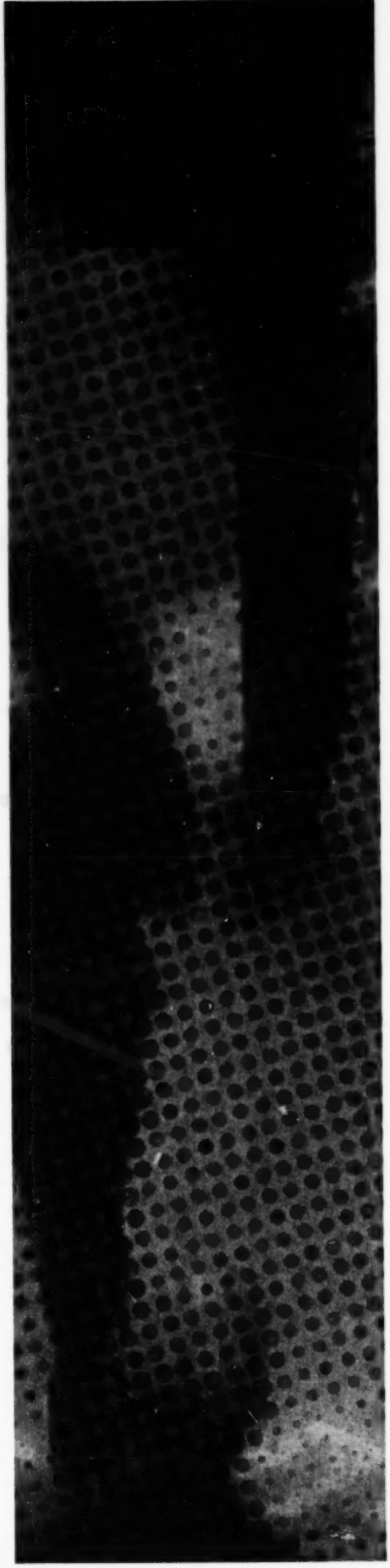

Questions and answers about problem gambling

What is problem gambling?

Problem gambling refers to any form of gambling behaviour that adversely affects family, personal, or vocational pursuits. It includes gambling that causes occasional problems as well as gambling that results in ongoing serious consequences. It can cause trouble for players, their families and friends, and the communities they live in.

Problem gambling is a recognized psychiatric disorder characterized by

(1) continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling behaviour,

(2) preoccupation with gambling and with obtaining money to gamble,

(3) irrational thinking, and

(4) continuation of gambling behaviour despite negative consequences.

What are the consequences of problem gambling?

People who have gambling problems can experience decreased initiative, interests narrowed to gambling, and reduced feelings of self-worth. Common emotional reactions include depression, outbursts of rage, and feelings of being out of control. Problem gamblers can experience loneliness and alienation from family and friends. Physical consequences include stress-related conditions such as insomnia, digestive problems, and back or neck pain. Problem gamblers also experience withdrawal symptoms such as disorientation and short attention span. Some experience shaking, nausea and vomiting due to stress.

The effects of problem gambling on the family are interpersonal conflict, instability, separation or divorce, and disregard for the safety and care of any children. The problem gambler may neglect responsibilities at home, work, or school. For communities, problems related to gambling can include criminal activity and lost productivity in the workplace.

Adapted from Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. (2001). Quick Facts About Alcohol, Other Drugs and Problem Gambling (p. 25). Edmonton, AB: Author.